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STOP, Thief!

Sen. Patterson introduces bill against leaks of cell-phone records

LANSING—Does someone want to use your private cell-phone records against you? By knowing a few personal facts, someone could pose as you to fraudulently obtain your phone records. Phone-service providers try to keep these records confidential, but they can be tricked by clever deceivers.

State Sen. Bruce Patterson, 7th District, chairman of the Senate Technology & Energy Committee, introduced Senate Bill 1202 to outlaw such deception and protect consumers. The bill was immediately assigned to Patterson's committee for hearings.

"With several outfits on the Internet claiming to provide this personal information, it is time to act," said Patterson, who in early January was the first legislator in the state to call for such legislation.

Operations claiming to offer private cell-phone records do not appear affiliated with any major cellular telephone or Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) service providers. Reports suggest that in some cases, telephone company insiders secretly sold customers' phone-call lists to online brokers, despite strict telephone-company rules against such deals. Internet sites offering these services sell this information for about \$90.

"This appears to be a growing problem around the country," said Patterson. "I am pleased that I received bipartisan support as soon as my bill was offered; everyone understands the urgency of the situation. Citizens were rightly concerned about identity theft, so the Michigan Legislature acted to provide such protections to consumers. This seems like the next logical step."

Sgt. Scott Hilden of the Canton Township Police conducts public seminars on avoiding identity theft. Hilden said he was pleased Sen. Patterson introduced this bill.

"Identity theft is an enormous problem for law enforcement," said Hilden. "I am completely in favor of a law to protect people's personal information and records. Anyone who fraudulently attempts to obtain any personal records, including cell-phone records, should have severe consequences under the law."

Patterson has guided legislation to combat spyware and SPAM through the Senate Technology & Energy Committee.

"People should not be robbed of their privacy by unscrupulous sleuths. Identity theft can occur in many ways, and I will work to stop it in every way I can," said Patterson.

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